

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 03036 290215Z

21

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAB-01 SSM-03 SAM-01 OMB-01 AID-05

/101 W

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R 281523Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2576

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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E.O.: 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, TS, LY

SUBJ: OULD DADDAAH MEDIATION APPEARS TO HAVE ENDED TUNISIA/
LIBYAN PROPAGANDA WAR BUT UNDERLYING CONFLICT CONTINUES

REF : TUNIS 2942, TUNIS 2953

1. SUMMARY: MEDIATION BETWEEN TUNISIA AND LIBYA BY MAURIT-
ANIAN PRESIDENT MOKHTAR OULD DADDAAH APPEARS TO HAVE RE-
SULTED IN CESSATION OF PROPAGANDA WAR THAT HAS RAGED BE-
TWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES FOR OVER A MONTH. IN STATEMENT ISSUED
APRIL 27, ON MEDIATION, GOT DECLARED THAT IT HAD AGREED TO
CESSATION OUT OF PERSONAL CONSIDERATION FOR OULD DADDAAH
DESPITE DISINTEREST ON PART OF LARG IN DISCUSSION OF ALL
OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS BETWEEN TUNISIA AND LIBYA. TUNISIA
APPARENTLY WANTED TO INCLUDE DISCUSSION OF DELINEATION OF
CONTINENTAL SHELF BOUNDARY BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES, AND RETURN
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PAGE 02 TUNIS 03036 290215Z

OF KIDNAPPED TUNISIAN BUSINESSMAN RAOUF MHENNI, BUT LIBYANS

APPARENTLY REFUSED. CONTINUATION OF THESE AND OTHER PROBLEMS PLUS ANTAGONISM CREATED BY PROPAGANDA WAR INDICATE THAT UNDERLYING CONFLICT BETWEEN TUNISIA AND LIBYA WILL GO ON FOR SOME TIME. END SUMMARY.

2. GOT FOREIGN MINISTRY ISSUED STATEMENT APRIL 27 INTENDED TO CORRECT ALLEGATION MADE BY LARGE PM JALLOUD THAT OULD DADDAH MEDIATION EFFORT HAD BEEN MADE AT TUNISIAN INITIATIVE. GOT STATEMENT GAVE ITS SIDE OF STORY AND, IN PROCESS, GAVE AMPLE DETAILS OF MAURITANIAN PRESIDENT'S MEDIATION. GOT ASSERTED THAT COLONEL QADHAFI HAD ORIGINALLY ASKED OULD DADDAH TO MEDIATE IN ORDER TO END VITUPERATIVE TWO-WAY MEDIA CAMPAIGN. GOT PUT OFF COOPERATION IN THIS EFFORT ON APRIL 18, WHEN IT WAS FIRST APPROACHED BY MAURITANIANS, IN ORDER TO PERMIT FULL PROPAGANDA EXPLOITATION OF TRIALLOF LIBYAN COMMANDOS.

3. WITH TRIAL ENDED, GOT WELCOMED OULD DADDAH IN TUNIS APRIL 24 AND PARTICIPATED IN THE "SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY" HE CONDUCTED UNTIL APRIL 27. GOT CLAIMED THAT LARG INSISTED THAT TUNISIA TAKE INITIATIVE IN ENDING PRESS CAMPAIGN. TUNISIANS REJECTED THID DEMAND, CLAIMING THAT LIBYANS HAD PROVOKED THE CONFLICT BY SENDING COMMANDO TEAM TO TUNIS. LIBYANS LIKEWISE REFUSED TO TAKE INITIATIVE IN ENDING ATTACKS. OULD DADDAH PROPOSED CONCURRENT CESSATION OF ATTACKS FOR MIDNIGHT APRIL 27-28. IN APRIL 27 STATEMENT, FOREIGN MINISTRY EMPHASIZED THAT IT HAD AGREED TO THIS PROPOSAL OUT OF CONSIDERATION FOR OULD DADDAH AND A CONCERN THAT HIS EFFORTS NOT END IN FAILURE.

4. GOT STATEMENT REVEALED THAT IT HAD SOUGHT TO TIE END OF PROPAGANDA WAR TO OPENING OF DISCUSSIONS WITH LARG ON OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. ACCORDING TO GOT, LARG MADE IT CLEAR THAT IT WAS NOT INTERESTED IN ADDRESSING THESE BASIC ISSUES.

5. GOT STATEMENT ON OULD DADDAH MEDIATION EFFORT WAS CARRIED ON FRENCH AND ARABIC RADIO APRIL 28 AND IN PRESS. NO OTHER ITEMS RELATED TO,

6. EXCEPT ACCOUNT OF OULD DADDAH'S DE-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 TUNIS 03036 290215Z

PARTURE FROM TUNIS APRIL 27, APPEARED IN MEDIA. WE NOTE THAT DAILY PROGRAM ON RADIO TRIPOL AT 7:15 A., WHICH FOR WEEKS HAS BEEN DEVOTED TO ATTACKING GOT, WAS REPLACED BY MUSIC TODAY.

6. COMMENT:

A. IT APPEARS THAT THE TUNISIANS HAVE AGREED TO AN END TO PROPAGANDA WAR WITH LIBYA LARGELY BECAUSE IT HAD REACHED

POINT OF DIMINISHING RETURNS. OULD DADDAH MEDIATION WAS A HELPFUL BOOST, BUT END OF LIBYAN COMMANDO TRIAL AND GROWING BOREDOM OF TUNISIAN PUBLIC AFTER A MONTH OF NON-STOP ATTACKS ON QADHAFI WERE PROBABLY CONSIDERATIONS WITH GOT. THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE PLEASED WITH THE MAURITANIAN MEDIATION IF IT HAD PRODUCED SOME FRUITFUL DISCUSSION WITH LARG ON UNDERLYING BILATERAL PROBLEMS. MOST IMPORTANT OF THESE ISSUES FOR GOT IS DELINEATION OF BOUNDARY OVER THE CONTINENTAL SHELF THAT WOULD PERMIT TUNISIAN EXPLOITATION OF LIKELY PETROLEUM RESOURCES IN DISPUTED AREA. A LESSER, BUT NONETHELESS SIGNIFICANT, ISSUE IS RELEASE OF TUNISIAN BUSINESSMAN RAOUF MHENNI WHO HAS APPARENTLY BEEN HELD IN LIBYA SINCE JANUARY.

B. GOT OAS DISINGENUOUSLY CLAIMED THAT ITS PROPAGANDA ATTACKS ON LIBYA HAVE ONLY BEEN INTENDED TO POINT OUT ANTI-TUNISIAN ACTIONS BY LARG, BUT GOT ALLEGATIONS THAT QADHAFI IS A DANGEROUS AND IRRATIONAL MAN AND PUBLICATION OF ANTI-LARG STATEMENT OF THE SPECIOUS "NATIONAL LIBYAN GATHERING" WERE UNDOUBTEDLY TAKEN BY LIBYANS AS MENACING ACTS.

ANTAGONISM CREATED BY SUCH ATTACKS ON BOOH SIDES OF THE BORDER, TAKEN TOGETHER WITH THE ASSASSINATION PLOT AGAINST HEDI NOUIRA, AND LONG-STANDING DIFFERENCES OVER BOUNDARY DELINEATION, THE PRECIPITATE EXPULSION OF OVER 11,000 TUNISIAN WORKERS IN LIBYA, AND THE KIDNAPPING OF AN INFLUENTIAL TUNISIAN BUSINESSMAN WILL PROBABLY CONTRIBUTE TO A CLIMATE OF CONTINUING CONFLICT BETWEEN TUNISIA AND LIBYA. GOT LEADERS UNDOUBTEDLY SEE THIS CONFLICT PRETTY MUCH ONE-SIDED, WITH ALL THE FAULT ON LARG SIDE. EVEN IF THEY WERE INCLINED TO TRY TO BE CONCILIATORY, THEY SEE LITTLE THEY COULD OFFER. END OF THE PROPAGANDA WAR--IF THIS REALLY IS THE END--BRINGS GOT BACK LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO EXACTLY WHERE IT WAS BEFORE, A STATE OF IMPOTENT FRUSTRATION VIS-A-VIS A DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS NEIGHBOR.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARBITRATION, PROPAGANDA, FOREIGN RELATIONS, BOUNDARY DETERMINATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: saccheem
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976TUNIS03036
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760163-1042
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760410/aaaaaiin.tel
Line Count: 159
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 TUNIS 2942, 76 TUNIS 2953
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: saccheem
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <10 AUG 2004 by saccheem>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OULD DADDAAH MEDIATION APPEARS TO HAVE ENDED TUNISIA/ LIBYAN PROPAGANDA WAR BUT UNDERLYING CONFLICT CONTINUES
TAGS: PFOR, TS, LY, (DADDAAH, OULD)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006